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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the achievement of Project GET SET, a Bronx, New York, program designed to provide supportive and peer-tutorial services to Hispanic junior high school students for the following purposes: (1) to reinforce English language skills, especially reading and writing; (2) to reinforce native language arts skills; (3) to offer personal counseling services; and (4) to offer career guidance. Pupils from a local high school were used as tutors. Their services were to be offered to students as extra enrichment classes. The report describes the program, its participants, and staff. It discusses evaluation findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. Project GET SET began in 1983 with many funding, staffing, and site problems. The program survived, however, and results of student performance on tests for English proficiency in Spring 1986 showed that seventh graders made gains, but they were not statistically significant. The gains made by eighth- and ninth-grade students were large and statistically significant. Achievement in Spanish proficiency and career awareness could not be evaluated because tests were not given. It was recommended that the project director devote more time to visits on site and that career and guidance information be included in the program curriculum whenever possible. (PS)

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PROJECT GET SET

1985-1986

OEA Evaluation Report

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O.E.A. Evaluation Section Report

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Grant Number: G00-830-2142

PROJECT GET SET

1985-1986

Project Director:

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A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

In its final year of funding, this project, located at two junior high schools in the Bronx, served 66 Hispanic students of limited ability in both English and Spanish. The sites selected, J.H.S. 80 and J.H.S. 143, served economically depressed neighborhoods of the Bronx, and had high enrollments of Hispanic students (over 50 percent) who needed the particular services provided by the project.

The project's major goals were to develop English language skills, to reinforce Spanish language skills when necessary, to offer counseling services, and to provide career information. In addition, the project was to have used the services of 15 students from Theodore Roosevelt High School to tutor project participants in English reading during the school day. (The number of student tutors was sharply reduced to two.)

Project GET SET was administered by the Office of Bilingual Education of the New York City Public Schools. Title VII funds were to have supported the positions of a project director, two resource specialists, a project secretary, and two student tutors. In the first year, full implementation of the project was delayed because of reduced and late receipt of funding, a change in sites, and problems in identifying and hiring staff. Consequently, the project began to be fully implemented only during the second half of the second year.

During the second and third years, students received all the services that had originally been proposed: supplemental language instruction, career awareness training, and personal guidance. These services were originally provided by a project director, two resource specialists, and two student tutors. In the third and final year of operation, the project lost two staff members: the project director left to take another administrative post and one resource specialist was dropped because of budget cuts. In response to this, the remaining resource specialist divided her time between the two junior high schools in a three-day/two-day time split, and a new project director was hired.

Instructional objectives were assessed in English language development (California Achievement Test and The Degrees of Reading Power [D.R.P.]). While the project proposed to serve 200 Hispanic students at two junior high schools, data are available for only a total of 66 students.

-- Eighth- and ninth-grade students made statistically significant gains on the D.R.P. The gains for seventh graders were not statistically significant.

Recommendations for similar projects in the future include administrative changes, such as back-up planning to avert the need to start from scratch if original sites prove unable to participate; more timely notification of staff postings in order to avoid missing contractual release deadlines; and locating the project director on-site, rather than at the central office.

The project is to be commended for its fine staff; for example, it is apparent that the services of the resource specialist were very much needed and appreciated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this report, as of all Office of Educational Assessment/Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit reports, is the result of a cooperative effort of regular staff and consultants. In addition to those whose names appear on the cover, Eulalia Cabrera has interpreted findings and has integrated material into reports. Arthur Lopatin has edited the reports following the O.E.A. style guide and has written report summaries. Finally, Joseph Rivera, Marcia Gilbert, Bruce Roach, Gladys Rosa, and Martin Zurla have worked intensively as word processors to produce and correct reports. Without their able and faithful participation, the unit could not have handled such a large volume of work and still produced quality evaluation reports.

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Project GET SET

Year of Funding:	1985-86, Final Year of a Three-Year Cycle
Central Office:	Office of Bilingual Education 131 Livingston Street Brooklyn, New York 11201
Participating Sites:	J.H.S. 80 Bronx, J.H.S. 143 Bronx, and Theodore Roosevelt High School
Target Language:	Spanish
Target Population:	66 Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students
Project Director:	Henriot Zephirin, Jr.

I. INTRODUCTION

Project GET SET was designed to provide supportive and peer-tutorial services to dually-limited Hispanic junior high school students for the following purposes:

-- to reinforce English language skills, especially reading and writing;

-- to reinforce native language arts skills;

-- to offer personal counseling services; and

-- to offer career guidance.

These services were to be offered to students as extra enrichment classes.

The program began in 1983 with a myriad of problems. The Office of Bilingual Education (O.B.E.) of the New York City Public Schools was originally to have coordinated and implemented Project GET SET at I.S. 49, J.H.S. 50, and Saints Peter and Paul School, all in Brooklyn. The project

also proposed to include the coordination of peer-tutoring services provided by 15 students from Eastern District High School, in Brooklyn. All three sites withdrew after the project had been approved; consequently, during the first year of funding, the project was transferred to Community School District (C.S.D.) 10 in the Bronx. Three schools were selected to participate: J.H.S. 80, J.H.S. 143, and Theodore Roosevelt High School. The project retained its central office at the O.B.E. headquarters at 131 Livingston Street in Brooklyn.

In addition, the award was granted late, and the funds were reduced, making it difficult to hire staff. Further, the project director resigned and a new director could not be appointed until January 1984. This contributed to the withdrawal from the project of the originally-selected sites in Brooklyn.

Soon after being appointed, the director began to establish contact with the newly-selected schools and their district office.

The resource specialists' positions were not filled in 1983-84. However, the project director was able to identify and establish contact with the new sites, review student records to determine eligibility, advertise and interview candidates for the vacant resource teacher positions, hire hourly personnel to develop the career awareness curriculum for use in 1984-85, and identify, review, and purchase appropriate textbooks, workbooks, reference books, instructional materials, and audio-visual materials for instructional use.

Finally, the project director hired two resource specialists in December 1984, to establish and operate the career enrichment program at each school. (J.H.S. 80 was the first school to be staffed.) By late

February 1985, both sites were operational and were serving a total of 100 students.

Activities during the project's second year included student selection, parental notification, outreach to non-project personnel, curriculum development, and hiring the student tutors.

During its final year, the project director took another administrative job, and further budget cuts caused a reduction in both staff and services. The project was left with a new director and one resource specialist who would work at both sites; the number of student tutors paid by Title VII was reduced from 15 to two.

The remaining resource specialist tried to maintain the same level of service, but this proved extremely difficult. For example, with only two or three days a week at each school, it was very difficult for the resource specialist to keep track of students who were absent from the enrichment classes. Managing the distribution of instructional materials to teachers within each school was another problem. In short, it proved extremely burdensome for one person to perform tasks that previously had been assigned to two. Finally, one principal felt that he and his staff had not received enough information about the project's goals and methods.

Notwithstanding all the obstacles, the resource specialist appears to have done an outstanding job and her services were greatly appreciated. The project director repeatedly mentioned she was a highly-valued team member, and the acting principal at J.H.S. 80 indicated that he was making every effort to keep her beyond the project's duration.

In its final year of funding, the program provided data for 66 seventh- through ninth-grade Hispanic students.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PARTICIPATING SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Although one of the participating junior high schools was in good physical condition while the other was in a state of disrepair, both were overcrowded. This made it necessary to conduct enrichment classes in the library of each school while other activities were simultaneously taking place.

Daily activities of program students in enrichment classes included using worksheets, reading, watching films, and other activities such as resumé preparation -- all of which were designed to develop career awareness. In addition, students attended presentations by outside speakers and went on field trips.

Junior High School 80

J.H.S. 80 served an economically depressed area of the Bronx, and was entitled to receive E.C.I.A. Chapter I funding. Approximately 74 percent of the students were eligible for the free lunch program. Of a total population of 1,311 students, 709 or 54 percent were Hispanic. Fifty-five percent of the students were reading below grade level. The school building also housed an elementary school, thus making it overcrowded and in great need of supportive services for its students.

Junior High School 143

J.H.S. 143 was also located in C.S.D. 10. In the fall, the school had a register of 1,902 students in grades seven through nine. The Hispanic enrollment of 1,129 children constituted 59 percent of the school's total population. This school also served an economically depressed part of

C.S.D. 10 (77 percent of the students were free-lunch eligible) and was entitled to E.C.I.A. Chapter I funding. Since 55 percent of the students were reading below grade level, the school clearly could benefit from the services proposed by Project GET SET.

Theodore Roosevelt High School

Situated in the central Bronx, Theodore Roosevelt High School was located between one of the borough's most affluent and one of its most economically deprived communities. However, most of the students came from the South Bronx. Of a total school register of approximately 3,470 students, 58 percent were Hispanic. Of these, 20 percent were of limited English proficiency. This high school was selected to provide student tutors because it was near the two target schools and many of its students are graduates of the district's intermediate and junior high schools.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The students targeted for this program grew up either in Spanish-speaking countries or in homes in this country in which Spanish is the language used. Although they were not considered to be learning disabled (and some had had two or more years of E.S.L. instruction), their weak command of both languages made it very difficult for them to learn content areas.

According to the project director, most of the targeted students came from family backgrounds characterized by poverty and low literacy in both Spanish and English. Thus they could be considered as "at risk" of failure and dropout.

The major tool for selecting students was the Language Assessment Battery (LAB). This test was developed by the New York City Board of Education's Office of Testing and has been accepted by the United States Office of Civil Rights as part of New York City's plan to satisfy federal regulations relating to the Lau vs. Nichols (1974) Supreme Court decision and the Aspira Consent Decree (1974). The LAB measures all four language skills: listening/understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.

Under the terms of the Aspira Consent Decree, Hispanic students who score at or below the twentieth percentile on the English version of the LAB and score at a higher percentile on the Spanish version are considered LEP and are entitled to a bilingual instructional program. However, some LEP students score even lower on the Spanish version of the LAB. These students who are weak in both native and English language skills, comprise the target population for Project GET SET.

In 1985-86, GET SET served 66 students in grades seven through nine. Thirty-one students were from J.H.S. 80 and 35 were from J.H.S. 143. (See Table 1.) Forty-seven percent of the students were eighth graders; 38 percent were in the seventh grade; and 15 percent were in the ninth. Females outnumbered males, 56 to 44 percent.

Twenty-seven percent of the students were born in Puerto Rico; 21 percent were born in the Dominican Republic; and one student was born in the United States. The remaining students were born in other Central and South American countries. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 1

Distribution of GET SET Students by Grade and School

Grade	J.H.S. 80	J.H.S. 143	Total	Percent
7	8	16	24	38
8	16	14	30	47
9	7	3	10	15
TOTAL	31	33*	64	
PERCENT OF TOTAL	48	52	100	

*Data on grade level were missing for two students from J.H.S. 143.

- Almost half of all students were eighth graders.
- Most students at J.H.S. 83 were in eighth grade whereas most students at J.H.S. 143 were in seventh and eighth grades.
- Both schools had relatively few ninth graders receiving services.

TABLE 2

Number and Percent of Project Participants
by Country of Birth

Country of Birth	Number	Percent
Puerto Rico	17	27
Dominican Republic	13	21
Honduras	2	3
Guatemala	2	3
Panama	2	3
Costa Rica	2	3
Cuba	1	2
Ecuador	1	2
Colombia	1	2
United States	1	2
Central and South American Country Unspecified	20	32
TOTAL	62*	100

*Data were missing for four students.

- Most participants were born in Central and South America.

PROGRAM STAFFING

The project's staff consisted of a project director, a resource specialist, and two part-time tutors. The project director was supervised by the director of the O.B.E. on all areas of project functioning: instruction, financial administration, and technical assistance. He was the liaison with school principals, staff members, parents, and other community members. He reviewed assessment instruments, furnished evaluation information, and attended meetings and conferences on project management and developments in the field of bilingual education.

The resource specialist spent two days at one site and three days at the other site each week. She provided supplementary English instruction to participating students, coordinated activities and resources with the project director, assisted with administrative tasks and program implementation, and assisted teachers in the use of curricula and curricular aids.

Two students from Theodore Roosevelt High School were hired to provide project students with individual tutoring in English reading. These student tutors were bilingual and had family backgrounds similar to those of project participants. Since they were also role models, they were required to maintain good academic records.

One high school student was based at each school on a part-time basis to tutor project students on an individual basis, and assist the resource specialist with tasks such as setting up audiovisual equipment and maintaining files. The tutors worked on reinforcing program students' English skills, freeing the resource specialist to concentrate on instructional planning and career guidance.

III. FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation of instructional objectives in reading and native language achievement for students receiving program services. Although the instructional objectives proposed to compare 100 students who participated in the program with similar non-program students, the budget cuts faced by the project resulted in fewer students being served. Data were collected for only 66 program participants, and no data were collected for a comparison group. Non-instructional objectives were also proposed for program participants. They include parental involvement, staff development, the affective domain, and curriculum and materials development.

ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT

Objective: By June, 70 percent of the students in the Bilingual Enrichment Classes will demonstrate English reading achievement that is significantly greater than that of similar non-program students.

Students were pretested in Spring, 1985 on the California Achievement Test (CAT) and posttested on the Degrees of Reading Power* (D.R.P.) test in Spring, 1986. In order to assess reading achievement, CAT raw scores were converted to D.R.P. normal curve equivalent (N.C.E.) scores and D.R.P. raw scores were converted to N.C.E.s.

*The Degrees of Reading Power was developed by the College Board to provide information about student reading ability on the same scale used to describe the difficulty of textbooks. The Kuder-Richardson reliability estimates are above .94, and various studies have demonstrated the validity of the test. It has convergent validity correlation coefficients with the California Achievement Test ranging from .77 to .85, and it was found to have a predictive validity correlation coefficient of .89 with the Word Completion Test.

N.C.E.s are normalized standard scores which have the advantage of forming an equal interval scale so that scores and gains can be averaged. For the norming population, N.C.E.s have a mean of 50, a standard deviation of approximately 20, and a range from one to 99. Thus, although no comparison group data were available, scores can be compared to the norming population, and an N.C.E. gain, no matter how small, indicates improvement.

Correlated *t*-tests on pretest and posttest N.C.E. scores for each grade level were computed to determine if the changes in scores were statistically significant (see Table 3). Students in grade seven gained an average of 7.1 N.C.E. points. Although this gain appears to be substantial, it is not significant because the variability among students' gains is quite large. Eighth graders gained 11.2 N.C.E. points, which was statistically significant at the .01 level. Finally, ninth-grade students gained an average of 12.1 N.C.E. points, which was also statistically significant at the .01 level.

Despite the large gains in N.C.E.s by participants across grades, it is important to take into account the small sample size (37 out of 66 students). It may be that these students are not representative of their cohort.

TABLE 3

English Achievement

Significance of Mean N.C.E. Score Differences
Between Initial and Final Test Scores of Students
on the Degrees of Reading Power Test by Grade

		Pretest		Posttest			
Grade	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	Mean S.D.
7	15	26.7	10.6	33.8	15.9	7.1	15.2
8	14	33.1	16.9	44.3	14.9	11.2*	10.2
9	8	25.9	10.6	38.0	8.5	12.1*	7.5

*Statistically significant at the .01 level.

- Eighth and ninth graders made statistically significant gains. Gains for seventh graders were not, due to the large variability for this grade.

SPANISH ACHIEVEMENT

Objective: By June, 70 percent of the participating students will have demonstrated improvement in Spanish language arts skills as measured by a pre-post administration of a program-developed test.

This objective cannot be evaluated as proposed because the project did not develop a Spanish language arts test.

CAREER-RELATED INSTRUCTION

Objective: By June, at least 70 percent of participating students will improve their knowledge of careers by passing teacher-made tests.

Since the project personnel did not have scores on teacher-made tests, this objective could not be evaluated.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Objective: Parents of participating students will be contacted by telephone, mail, or visited by family assistants at least twice each semester regarding the progress of their children. This is in addition to report cards issued three times a year.

According to the project director, every week parents were sent letters to inform them of the schools' activities, and twice a month, parents were given the opportunity to attend field trips with their children. They were also contacted by telephone.

Objective: At least five workshops on guidance-related themes such as understanding adolescent behavior, requirements for promotion, instruments used to assess bilingual students' career opportunities, and the types of high schools offering courses that students are interested in pursuing, will be held for parents of participating students.

Once a month, the project made telephone contacts, held parent-teacher conferences, and workshops on guidance-related themes. These conferences and workshops were reportedly well attended.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Objective: Staff members will participate in at least five workshops on methods of integrating career education in the curriculum.

By June, 70 percent of the high school student aides will participate in at least 16 training sessions on tutoring techniques utilized with program participants.

Since attendance records for staff members were not kept, this objective cannot be assessed as proposed. However, according to progress reports by the project director, workshops and training sessions were held for staff.

AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Objective: By June, 70 percent of program students will meet at least once a week with the guidance counselor to discuss academic progress and personal issues.

The project director reported that academic and personal counseling were provided by the resource teacher on a weekly basis. Students also attended an average of 5.2 sessions with a bilingual counselor. The objective appears to have been met in this area.

Objective: As a result of participating in the program, the attendance of program participants will surpass that of the school as a whole during 1984-85.

The attendance of program students was very high at each school. Program students at J.H.S. 80 had an 89 percent attendance rate, surpassing the school rate (78 percent) by 11 percentage points. Program students at J.H.S. 143 had a 90 percent attendance rate, also surpassing the school attendance rate (83 percent) by seven percentage points. Clearly this program objective was met.

CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Objective: By June, bilingual learning activity units consisting of lessons, enrichment activities and evaluations related to career awareness and exploration will be developed for each grade.

As indicated in the project's progress report, and as reported by the project director, bilingual learning activity units were developed and supplied to the program. For example, staff collected newspaper and magazine articles on jobs, and prepared a list of community agencies and individuals who were available as contacts for individuals seeking employment and referrals. Activities such as these certainly meet the criteria for satisfying the program's objective.

Objective: By June, participating students will attend at least six field trips to representative places of work to aid in the development of their career interests.

Field trips were provided to develop career interests. With regard to this objective, data are available for 66 students, of whom 65 went on six trips and one student went on three. This objective was apparently achieved.

Objective: By June, 70 percent of the program students will have attended at least 90 tutorial sessions provided by high school student aides.

The number of tutorial sessions attended by the 65 participants for whom data are available ranged from zero to 40, with a mean of 22 and a standard deviation of 9.8. Most students (51 or 77 percent of those reported) attended an average of 26 sessions, with participation ranging from 15 to 40 sessions. The observed pattern of attendance differs widely from the program criterion, suggesting that the program objective was not achieved.

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the budget cuts, the program provided tutoring in English and native language instruction, offered career guidance, adapted materials to meet the academic and linguistic needs of the students, made home contact by mail and by phone, and gave students aides the opportunity to serve as academic tutors and role models. These activities were largely carried out by the resource specialist and the project director.

The results of student performance on tests for English proficiency were available for half the students reported. Seventh graders made gains, but they were not statistically significant. However, the gains made by eighth- and ninth-grade students were large and statistically significant. Achievement in Spanish proficiency and career awareness could not be evaluated because tests were not given.

Since this is the project's final year, the following recommendations are aimed at similar efforts in the future.

It would be helpful if the project director would devote more time to visits on-site. The project director can function as a role model for students if seen on a daily basis.

The practice of trying to integrate career and guidance information with the regular curriculum whenever possible and appropriate should be continued. Given the increased demands of today's job market, it seems to be an excellent idea to try to weave information about the world of work into the basic curriculum of the school. However, if this component is to be evaluated with teacher-made tests on career information, these tests should be developed and pilot-tested in classrooms.

Project GET SET managed to cope with a series of unexpected changes, enabling some students to receive supplemental services in the areas of language development and career education. Three high school students were also given the opportunity to tutor younger students. This contributed to their personal development and at the same time enabled them to earn money in a supervised work setting. It appears, however, that while some activities were implemented during the project's final year, documentation was not adequately kept. As a result, it is difficult to determine the full value of this project. Nevertheless, based on what information is available, it appears that a program such as GET SET has great potential in improving students' skills in English.